

FHSU Teacher Education Study Tips in Preparation for Comprehensive Exams – Beginning & During Graduate Coursework

Below are organization and study tips to help Teacher Education graduate students prepare for their comprehensive exams. Preparations should occur at the same time a student BEGINS the program of study. Review the suggestions below and design your own personal plan in preparation for comprehensive exams.

1. Strategies for Beginning of Program of Study

Teacher Education Website Information

Individually, review the following information on comprehensive exams at www.fhsu.edu/te/grad/comps.shtml:

- **Comprehensive Exam Guide for Master of Science in Education - Elementary Education and Secondary Education**
- **Department of Teacher Education Comprehensive Exam Rubric**
- **Question Pool**

These documents will help you understand how to prepare for the exam. Review the question pool at the beginning of each semester of study. Identify which classes relate to questions within the pool.

Instructor Tips

1. Teacher Education graduate faculty may mention examples of comprehensive exam questions relevant to the course. Write down all examples. The question pool will be revised on a regular basis. You can practice answering them later with your study team and/or on your own.
2. Review the questions from the question pool related to the specific course you are enrolled in. Ask your instructors to cover information they feel is most relevant associated with each question.
3. Take detailed notes on all information discussed in class which is associated with each question.
4. Practice writing question responses. Personally evaluate your writing using the same rubric. Decide what additional information, theory, research, etc. would strengthen your response, and write a second draft for your self evaluation. Request assistance from your instructors if needed.

Develop an Organization Plan

1. Buy (and study) all required textbooks. Discuss with your instructor which recommended books should be purchased. Carefully read all textbooks and highlight key points. Develop a system to summarize the chapters (index cards, notebooks, computer files, etc.). This will help with studying for the exams, writing class papers, and studying for the comprehensive exams at the end of your program of study.
2. It is recommended that you keep all required textbooks; do not sell them or return them when the class is over. You will need to review all classes in preparation for the exam. Textbooks are an excellent resource when studying for the exams.

3. Use the resources at the FHSU library. Explore internet research databases. Explore what other authors say about the topic and theories related to each course. As you begin to critically analyze the theories/research in your field, keep information on researchers who refute major theories learned in class. This will help you develop comprehensive exam answers that compare and contrast relevant information/theories/research, giving the reader different perspectives on the topic and showing the possible limitations of those theories.
4. Take detailed notes in each class and as you do your out-of-class research. Develop a system to organize all notes, handouts, articles, and papers. (3-ring binders, file folders with dividers, etc.)

Electronic Tips

1. Always make backup copies of all documents created on computers. Consider keeping backup disks in a fireproof safe. Disks can get lost or damaged and/or computers can get viruses. Losing information will cost you a lot of time as you have to redevelop your electronic resources for the exam.

Develop/Join a Study Group

1. Develop strong working relationships with fellow graduate students with similar study habits.
2. Consider developing a graduate study group with these students. Look for diversity when developing your study group. Find students who have different perspectives and philosophies to broaden your horizons and challenge your ideas.
3. Brainstorm key points, research/researchers, theory/theorists, etc. for each question in the question pool relevant to the courses you are taking each semester.
4. Practice writing comprehensive exam question responses from the question pool. Have the members of your study group evaluate your responses using the Comprehensive Exam Rubric. Brainstorm ways to strengthen your responses and develop a second draft for review and evaluation

2. Strategies for End of Program of Study

Develop your Comprehensive Exam Study Group

1. By the end of your program of study, you should have participated in several study groups for different classes. Develop a comprehensive exam study group composed of students you have most successfully studied with during your graduate program. Limit your study group to 3 to 6 people. Larger groups may decrease the functionality of the team.
2. It is easiest to study with students who have the same area of emphasis - reading, ESOL, etc. If not, you may need to develop two study teams; one to prepare for the core course questions and another to prepare for your area of emphasis questions.
3. Develop a meeting schedule and location. You will want to study together for several weeks (up to 2 months) prior to the exam. Set up the entire study schedule leading up to the day of the exam. Pick a meeting location such as the library that will allow the group to study without distractions.
4. Discuss logistical issues with your family members, including childcare, meals and other family issues that may arise when you are unavailable for family members. Other family members will need to take on some of your responsibilities on a short-term basis as you prepare for your exams.
5. As a team, review all information on comprehensive exams at www.fhsu.edu/te/grad/comps.shtml and **develop your team and personal study strategies/plan.**